

Supplying Safe Drinking Water

What are my responsibilities to ensure safe drinking water under O. Reg. 252/05?

A guide for owners and operators of

NON-MUNICIPAL SEASONAL RESIDENTIAL DRINKING-WATER
systems that do not serve designated facilities.

These systems supply water seasonally and serve:

- Campgrounds and trailer parks with six or more sites with water service hook-ups
- Communal cottage developments with six or more residences

HOW YOU CAN PROVIDE SAFE DRINKING WATER – A CHECKLIST

- ☐ I have confirmed that this guide applies to my drinking-water system (page 3)
- ☐ I have completed the following steps (page 4):
 - Step 1: Select a licensed laboratory (page 4)
 - Step 2: Take drinking-water samples for testing (page 4)
 - Step 3: Notify authorities of adverse test results (page 5)
 - Step 4: Take corrective action if you have an adverse test result (page 6)
 - Step 5: Post warning notices of potential problems (page 7)
 - Step 6: Retain records and information (page 8)

A: Introduction

Under the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*, and the “Non-Residential and Non-Municipal Seasonal Residential Systems that Do Not Serve Designated Facilities Regulation” (O. Reg. 252/05), owners and operators of drinking-water systems that supply water seasonally to six or more cottages/residences or to a trailer park or campground with six or more water service hook-ups have responsibilities to ensure the water is safe to drink. This guide outlines responsibilities as they apply to owners or operators of non-municipal seasonal residential drinking-water systems. It does not include systems that serve designated facilities (see section B on page 3).

The government intends to develop new legislation that, if passed, would transfer responsibility for regulating these systems to public health units overseen by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The Ministry of the Environment will continue to oversee these systems until the intended transfer to public health units.

The regulation and this guide will help to ensure that public health is protected and drinking-water standards are maintained until this new framework is developed.

Remember, this guide is only a summary

To be clear about your specific legal requirements, you must refer to the text of the “Non-Residential and Non-Municipal Seasonal Residential Systems that Do Not Serve Designated Facilities Regulation” (O.Reg. 252/05) and the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*. You can access these at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca or by calling our Public Information Centre at: 1-800-565-4923

B: Does this guide apply to my drinking-water system?

This guide is for you if you are an owner or operator of a non-municipal seasonal residential drinking-water system, and your system:

- obtains its own raw water from a well or surface water source (such as a lake or river);
- is not owned by a municipality;
- serves six or more private residences, or a trailer park or campground with six or more sites with water service hook-ups;
- does not operate to supply water for at least 60 consecutive days per year; and
- does not serve a designated facility.

This guide is NOT for use by owners or operators of drinking-water systems who supply water to designated facilities:

Designated facilities serve people who would be more susceptible to drinking water of poor quality. These facilities include **children's camps, day nurseries and other children and youth facilities, nursing homes and other health-care facilities, schools, private schools and university/college facilities, hostels and other delivery agent care facilities, or shelters and other social-care facilities**. Drinking-water systems that provide water to designated facilities are regulated under O. Reg. 170/03.

How have my requirements changed?

	O. Reg. 170/03	O. Reg. 252/05
Microbiological sampling in the distribution system	Collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory weekly or every 2 weeks, plus one sample per month for each additional 100 hook-ups (<i>E. coli</i> / fecal coliforms, total coliforms and HPC testing)	Collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory every 2 weeks, plus one sample per month for each additional 100 hook-ups (<i>E. coli</i> and total coliforms only)
Microbiological sampling of the raw water supply	Collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory monthly	Not Required
Chemical sampling	Collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory ranging from once every 3 months to once every 5 years	Not Required
Installation of treatment	Install treatment equipment by December 31, 2006	No requirement to install treatment
Annual Reports	Each year by December 31	Not required

C: How do I meet my drinking-water testing requirements?

In order to meet the requirements for testing your water, you must take the following 6 steps.

Step 1: Select a licensed laboratory

- Drinking-water samples must be sent to a laboratory licensed by the Ministry of the Environment to test for bacteria (*E. coli* and total coliforms).
- Before sending your samples to a licensed laboratory for the first time, you must submit the *Laboratory Services Notification* form (available on the Ministry's website at www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/reg252.htm) to the ministry by fax at: 416-235-6312, identifying the licensed laboratory(ies) that will be carrying out the testing. You will then be assigned a drinking-water system number.
- The licensed laboratory will send a written report of the results to you within 28 days of completing the test, and will also provide the results to the Ministry.

How can I find out if a laboratory is licensed for microbiological/bacteria testing?

1. View the list of licensed laboratories on the Ministry's web site: www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.htm ; or
2. Contact the Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923; or
3. Contact a laboratory directly and ask them if they are licensed to test for *E. coli* and total coliforms.

Step 2: Take drinking-water samples for testing

- Owners and operators can take their own drinking-water samples.
- Licensed laboratories will provide you with instructions on proper techniques for sample collection, transport, storage and temperature control, and will also supply the appropriate containers. You must follow these instructions (see box below).
- Pay particular attention to the instructions for temperature control of the samples. Do not freeze samples. Make sure that if samples are being transported in a vehicle that they are kept in a cooler with ice packs or other means to keep them cool.
- Each time a sample is collected, the collector must complete the *Chain-of-Custody Form* provided by the licensed laboratory. This form records your drinking-water system number, the date and time the sample was taken, where it was taken, and the sampler's name.

Note: If your system is using chlorine, then you must also sample and test for chlorine residual at the same time and location of your bacterial sample. Make sure the chlorine residual value is recorded clearly on your *Chain-of-Custody Form*, along with your microbiological sample.

Sampling and testing requirements

How often to collect samples

- At least once every 2 weeks while operating to supply water. A sample must be collected between 10 and 20 days after the last sample was collected.
- An additional monthly sample is required for every 100 service connections.

What licensed laboratories test for:

They test for the presence of the following bacteria:

- *E. coli*
- Total coliforms

Where and how to collect samples

- Collect your sample from a point after the water has entered the distribution or plumbing system. For example, samples can be taken from taps throughout buildings served by the system.
- Follow the licensed laboratory's instructions which will include removing screens/ filters at any taps, allowing the water to run for at least 2 minutes, not touching or otherwise contaminating sample bottles, capping the bottle immediately, leaving an airspace so that the bottle does not overflow, and preventing splashing.

Seasonal Operations Shutdowns

Note: You are not required to perform sampling or testing during a period of seven or more consecutive days when:

- your system is not supplying water to any public facilities that are open, and
- your system is not supplying water to:
 - six or more cottages/residences; or
 - a trailer park or campground with six or more sites with water service hook-ups.

Upon restarting the system you must collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory for testing, and receive the results prior to supplying drinking water to users of the system.

Step 3: Notify authorities of adverse test results

An adverse water quality incident (AWQI) is a test result that indicates the presence of *E. coli* or total coliforms in your drinking-water sample. Your licensed laboratory will notify you if an adverse test result arises (See Schedule 4, s.4-3 of O. Reg. 252/05 for more details).

Owners and operators of drinking-water systems must immediately report adverse drinking-water test results to the Ministry of the Environment's (MOE)

Spills Action Centre and the local Medical Officer of Health (see box to the right for more information). The laboratory is also required to report the results.

What must I do if I have an adverse test result?

First: Make immediate report (by telephone or in person).

Immediately report the adverse water quality test result (as provided to you by your licensed laboratory) to the MOE Spills Action Centre (telephone 1-800-268-6060) and the local Medical Officer of Health, by speaking with someone in person or on the telephone.

Specify the adverse test result and the corrective action that is being taken.

Second: Deliver written notice.

Within 24 hours of giving the verbal notice, you must deliver written notice to:

- the local Medical Officer of Health; and
- the MOE Spills Action Centre by fax at 1-800-268-6061.

Use the *Non-Residential and Non-Municipal Seasonal Residential Systems That Do Not Serve Designated Facilities* (O. Reg. 252/05) **NOTICE OF ADVERSE TEST RESULTS** and **NOTICE OF ISSUE RESOLUTION** available on the Ministry's website at www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/reg252.htm

The written notice must indicate the problem and the corrective action that is being taken.

Third: Deliver follow-up notice of action taken.

Within seven days of resolving the problem that gave rise to the adverse test result, you must submit the same form with a completed Section 2(b) Notice of Issue Resolution available on the Ministry's website at www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/reg252.htm

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The follow-up written notice must summarize the action taken and the results achieved. Send it to the local Medical Officer of Health, and the MOE Spills Action Centre.

Step 4: Take corrective action if you have an adverse test result

If your system receives an adverse water quality test result, not only must you notify the appropriate authorities as stated above, but you must also resolve the problem and protect the people who drink your water.

You must follow the proper set of corrective actions following adverse test results for *E. coli* or total coliforms.

A local Ministry of the Environment inspector may contact you by telephone to ensure that you are taking the appropriate corrective action.

You can also contact your local ministry office for advice on adverse test results. Visit: www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/org/op.htm#Reg/Dist for contact information.

If *E. coli* are detected, see the corrective actions on this page. If total coliforms are detected, see the corrective actions on the next page. (see Schedule 5 of O. Reg. 252/05 for more details):

Taking Corrective Actions on Adverse Test Results

If *E. coli* are detected:

1. Immediately notify all users of water from the system to use an alternate source of water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid rolling boil for at least one minute before use – See Step 5 on page 7 for details about these warning notices.
2. Immediately resample and test.*

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3. If your system uses chlorine, immediately flush the system to ensure a chlorine residual is achieved. Maintain the chlorine residual until *E. coli* are not detected in two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.
4. If your system does not use chlorine, immediately follow the Ministry's *Procedure for Corrective Action for Non-Residential and Non-Municipal Seasonal Residential Systems that Do Not Serve Designated Facilities and are Not Currently Using Chlorine*. (Available at: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/5150e.pdf>)

Steps include:

- a. inspecting the well-head and surrounding property, the distribution system and plumbing to ensure that they are properly constructed and maintained to prevent entry of contamination.
 - b. using temporary disinfection, flushing the system and continuing to resample and test until *E. coli* are not detected in any sample from two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.
5. Follow other directions from the local Medical Officer of Health.

* To “resample and test” means that you must collect and transport a set of at least three drinking- water samples to your licensed laboratory for analysis. The first sample must be from the same location as the sample that gave rise to the corrective action. The second sample must be from a location that is a significant distance upstream from the location of the adverse result, where reasonably possible, and the third sample must be from a location that is a significant distance downstream from the adverse result, where reasonably possible.

Taking Corrective Actions on Adverse Test Results

If Total Coliforms are detected:

1. Resample and test* as soon as reasonably possible.
2. If a resample confirms the presence of total coliforms and your system uses chlorine, immediately flush the system to ensure a chlorine residual is achieved. Maintain the chlorine residual until total coliforms are not detected in two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.
3. If a resample confirms the presence of total coliforms and your system does not use chlorine, immediately follow the Ministry's *Procedure for Corrective Action for Non-Residential and Non-Municipal Seasonal Residential Systems that Do Not Serve Designated Facilities and are Not Currently Using Chlorine*. (Available at: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/5150e.pdf>)

Steps include:
 - a. inspecting the well-head and surrounding property, the distribution system and plumbing to ensure that they are properly constructed and maintained to prevent entry of contamination.
 - b. using temporary disinfection, flushing the system and continuing to resample and test until total coliforms are not detected in any of the samples from two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.

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4. Follow other directions from the local Medical Officer of Health.

* To “resample and test” means that you must collect and transport a set of at least three drinking- water samples to your licensed laboratory for analysis. The first sample must be from the same location as the sample that gave rise to the corrective action. The second sample must be from a location that is a significant distance upstream from the location of the adverse result, where reasonably possible, and the third sample must be from a location that is a significant distance downstream from the adverse result, where reasonably possible.

Step 5: Post warning notices of potential problems

You must post a warning notice to advise the public if:

- you get adverse test results for *E. coli*; or
- you are not currently meeting your sampling requirements and you do not have signs already posted at the taps; or
- you have not yet carried out required corrective actions.

Warning Notices do NOT provide an exemption for testing or corrective action!

The warning notices required to be posted are a temporary requirement meant to protect public health in the short term. The owner must still comply with testing and corrective action requirements as soon as possible, despite posting the warning notice.

Where do I post the warning notice?

Post the notice in a prominent location where it is likely to be seen by those using water from the system. If you fail to post a warning notice at your drinking-water system, a provincial officer or public health inspector may do so instead.

What must the warning notices say and where can I obtain them?

Warning notices must be in a form provided by or approved by the Ministry. There are two warning notices available from the Ministry of the Environment. Ensure with Ministry staff that the proper notice is used. You can obtain Ministry of the Environment-approved warning notices by calling 1-800-565-4923.

If you have not yet obtained warning notices, you can (as an interim measure) post any sign that states: “Public Notice: Do not drink this water” until you have received the Ministry-approved warning notice.

Step 6: Retain records and information

- For the public, keep copies of all the results from your required samples on site for at least two years. You must make them available on request, free of charge during normal business hours. You must also have a copy of O. Reg. 252/05 available to the public.
- For Ministry of the Environment inspectors, keep copies of all the records or reports of test results from your required samples for at least five years.

Note: If a Ministry of the Environment order or approval applies to your drinking-water system, or if you have already installed treatment equipment in accordance with previous regulations, then there may be additional requirements to keep related information available and to retain it for inspection. Please see sections 11 and 12 of O. Reg. 252/05 for more information.

F: Who can I contact for more information?

- If you would like other guides and fact sheets related to drinking water, please contact the Ministry of the Environment’s Public Information Centre at: 1-800-565-4923 or visit the Ministry of the Environment’s website at: www.ene.gov.on.ca
- You can also sign up for drinking-water updates by sending an email to: drinking.water@ene.gov.on.ca and requesting that you be added to our mailing list.